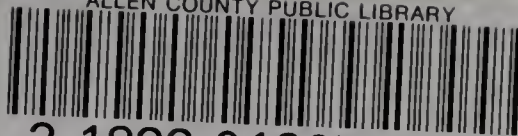


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JOSEPH ROTCH

by John M. Bullard

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JOSEPH ROTCH IN NANTUCKET AND DARTMOUTH



AN ADDRESS BY JOHN M. BULLARD AT A MEETING
OF THE OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY.
DELIVERED AT FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE,
NEW BEDFORD, DECEMBER 12, 1931.

PUBLISHED BY THE OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
New Bedford, Massachusetts

The first winter meeting of the Old Dartmouth Historical society was held Saturday afternoon, December 12, 1931 at Friends Meeting House. There was a very large attendance. Rev. Oscar Mostrom, minister of the meeting, opened with a word of welcome to the Society and Zephaniah W. Pease, president of the Society, introduced John M. Bullard, the speaker of the afternoon, who read a paper on "Joseph Rotch in Nantucket and Dartmouth.

Mr. Bullard, who is a lineal descendant of Joseph Rotch, has been engaged for a long period in research along original lines with the early history of the Rotches and has had access to new material. Address by John M. Bullard.

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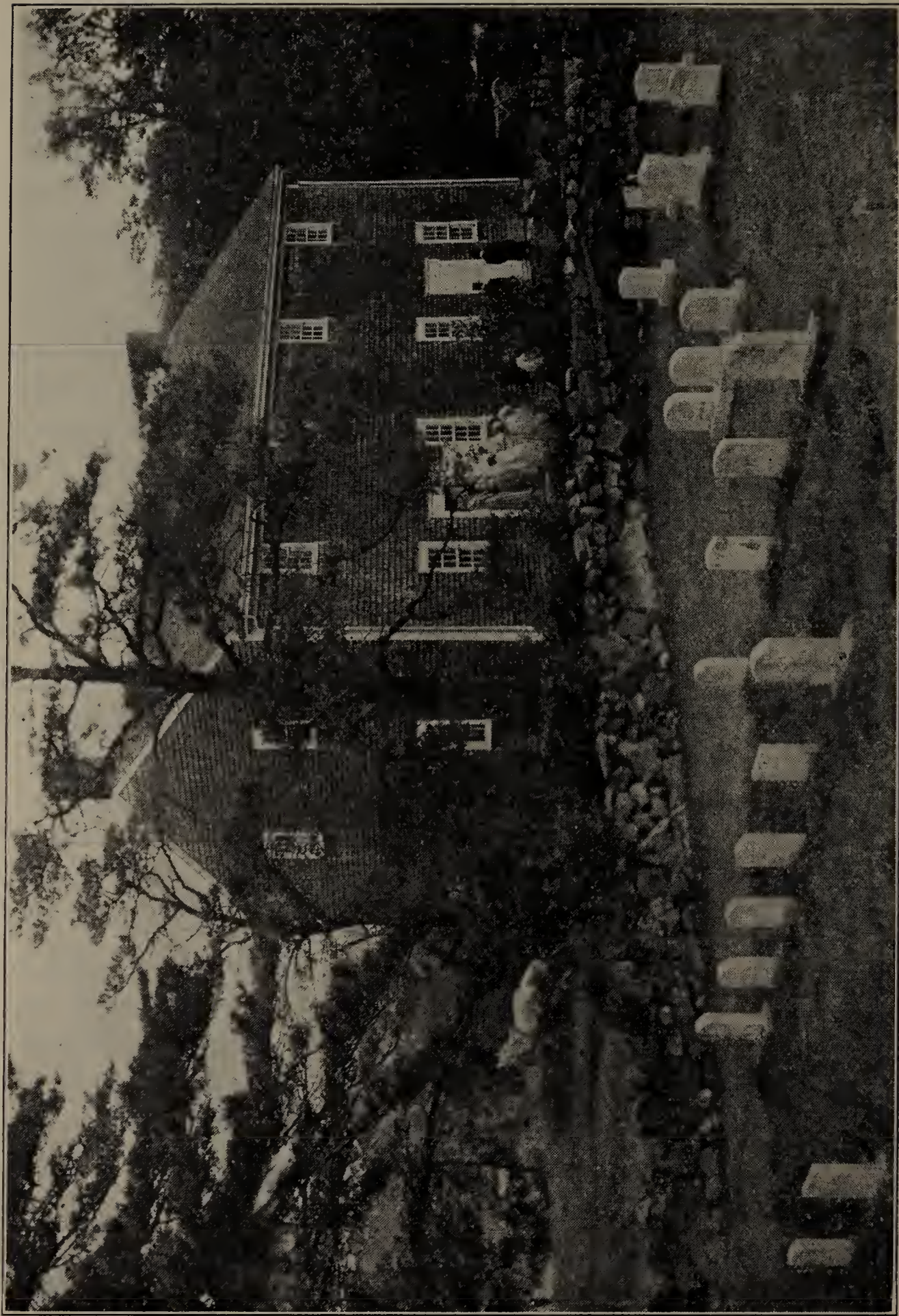
WHO WAS JOSEPH ROTCH?

A century is nothing, as our scientists record time; it is barely more than the lifetime of many men. Yet it would have been hard, in 1830, for any adult in Nantucket or New Bedford to have believed an answer to this question necessary. It would, to be sure, have been an apt question when Joseph first stepped on Nantucket's shore, just as he was reaching manhood. Perhaps he could have answered it then. Evidently he did not care to.

Old Family Tradition has his place in any geneological story, but he cannot always be relied on. For the last hundred years, at least, all of the Rotch family, so far as I know, have believed that Joseph was the immigrant, or at least one of the immigrants, and that he came from Salisbury in England. Salisbury is a good place for Tradition to favor. What in England is older than Stonehenge? Unfortunately I do not believe that Joseph Rotch came from Salisbury. I do not believe he came from England at all. Old Family Tradition says that, being penniless, he paid for his passage to America with a silk Spanish handkerchief. Old Family Tradition says he had a father, as have most men, and that his father's name was William, and that William too, was an immigrant, and lived in Provincetown on Cape Cod. He does not say whether this father William was smuggled in by the enterprising son in the Spanish handkerchief, or what happened to him afterwards, or little else about him except that he had a wife, and that her name was Hannah.

Now far be it from me to say that Old Family Tradition is all wrong. He isn't all wrong. In fact he isn't even very much wrong, except for this business of Joseph's coming from Salisbury. And perhaps some day we shall find just where this Salisbury story fits in.

It was only recently that Miss Elizabeth Watson mentioned by chance in my presence the History of Martha's Vineyard, by Charles Edward Banks, M. D. and that an examination of this book showed me that there was considerable the trouble with Old Family Tradition.



Burial Place of Joseph Rotch at Apponegansett

He could not stand up against the records that Dr. Banks had unearthed. Joseph's father was named William. Score one for Old Family Tradition. But he married, raised his children, or rather started to raise them, and died in Salem, Massachusetts, and not in Salisbury, England, or even Provincetown. He was a weaver by trade, he left a little property, and he had a wife named Hannah. Score two for Old Family Tradition. But the records are much kinder to Hannah than is Tradition, who presupposes that her name was once Rotch, but neglects to tell us that her name was first Potter, that her father's name was Nicholas Potter, that her mother's name was Mary Gedney, and that, after she had been Hannah Rotch for some years, she decided to become Hannah Darling. Perhaps this change of name was because no one seemed to know how to spell Rotch. They could, of course, pronounce it, for they usually spelled it R-o-a-c-h, or R-o-a-c-h-e, though sometimes R-o-c-h, and very occasionally R-o-t-c-h. Probably Hannah felt she would be much safer with a name like Darling, that would have a definite meaning, even two hundred years later. But her contemporaries spelled her new name as badly as her old, leaving the "g" off when hard pressed. And the pity of it all was that, so far as the records show, Hannah couldn't spell any of her names, or write them, so she couldn't keep her neighbors straight in this little matter, which probably seems more important now than it did then.

Old Family Tradition scores three when the records show William Rotch in Provincetown after all. But the records show that this was Joseph's older brother, and not his father. And I think Old Family Tradition is entitled to score four on that Spanish handkerchief. The records do not help here but Old Family Tradition's brother, Other Family Tradition, says Joseph was taken from Cape Cod to Nantucket in a "Wood Sloop" and not having any money, paid for his passage with a black silk handkerchief. This may well have been so.

Now when Joseph R-o-t-c-h, for so he and his brothers spelled their names, landed on Nantucket he didn't even have that handkerchief any more. He was only a boy, but he was endowed with foresight if not with pennies. He was a pioneer, with no Old Family Tradition to confuse him, and he probably decided that the people of Nantucket, good Quakers all, would be just as well satisfied

if he didn't come from Salem, where a very short time before the worthy Puritans had been hanging Quakers. And perhaps he calmed his conscience for not mentioning those other Rotches in Salem by resolving that he would see to it that it would be a good two centuries before any one had to ask any questions about himself and his sons.

Joseph Rotch was a cordwainer, when he first speaks of himself in a deed to his brother William on July sixteenth, 1725. Tradition says he was born March 6th, 1704, and this deed would seem to prove this a fact, for brother William, who was considerably older, had started acquiring his late father's Salem land in 1718. In that year he received a deed from his mother, Hannah, and her husband Daniel Darlin, which he supplemented in 1723 by deeds from his sisters Elizabeth Webb and Mary Symonds. It was not until two years later that he took a deed from Joseph, though the 1718 deed refers to a payment made to the latter and Benjamin, whose deed remains unrecorded, if it was ever executed. Undoubtedly William was taking no chances and waited for his youngest brother to come of age. So four months and ten days after he had reached his majority Joseph first has an opportunity to tell us of himself. And in this deed he tells us a good deal; first, that he is a cordwainer, second, that he was late of Boston, third, that he could spell his name R-o-t-c-h, and saw to it that the scrivener of the deed maintained that spelling throughout, fourth, that he was the son of William and Hannah Rotch, late of Salem in the County of Essex, fifth, that "William Rotch of Cape Cod in the Constableweick of Treuwro in Ye County of Barnstable, Fisherman", was his brother, and sixth, that on the sixteenth day of July, 1725, when he described himself as late of Boston, he was actually present in Barnstable County.

Tradition says that Joseph had gone to Nantucket in 1720, very early in life, and that he came from Braintree. Perhaps so, but I doubt it. Inferentially he grew up in Salem. No record of his birth exists anywhere, as far as I can learn. His oldest brother and his sisters appear on the records as having been born in Salem. His father's estate was administered there in 1705, the year after Joseph's birth. Joseph was himself, when he gave the deed, a cordwainer, and so were his step-father, Daniel Darling and his brother-in-law, Samuel Symonds, both of whom were residents of Salem.

Perhaps you do not know what a cordwainer was. He was a worker in cordwain, or cordovan leather, and would be called today a shoemaker or cobbler. What is more probable than that Joseph learned his trade from his family in Salem? But, as he later proved, he was a rover. Evidently he had settled in Boston long enough to consider himself a resident of that town before he became of age. And evidently he was not intending to return there, or to stay in Barnstable, when he made the deed. So probably he was on his way to Nantucket in 1725. In the deed he says he received fifteen pounds, but his mother's deed says he got that money seven years before, so perhaps, after all, he was honest when he paid for his trip with a black silk handkerchief.

I am sorry that I know so little of Joseph's father, that old weaver, William the first. He may, to be sure, have had the ability and indomitable will that characterized his son and his grandson. He probably did if he was the immigrant. But though I know he was married in Salem about 1690 or 1691, I do not know how he got there or where he came from. But in a story connected with Nantucket and New Bedford, he would hardly have a place at any rate. Joseph was the founder of the local branch of the Rotch family and to me the most interesting of them all. Though he did not hob-nob with the great as much as did his forceful son, he gave the latter a start which he had never been given himself, and amassed a fortune which made the subsequent history of the family possible. He deserves to be considered as its head. We know so little of him as compared with his descendants that it seems important to set down all that is known.

What then do we know of this young man who landed on Nantucket, such a stranger that none could contradict him when he claimed to come from Salisbury, England? Such queer things are preserved by word of mouth, and somewhere along the line someone has seen fit to record, "I have heard that his sneeze was remarkable—so loud that it could be heard across the water."

As I have said, as far as I know no record of Joseph's birth exists. Tradition says it occurred on third month, sixth, 1704. And I think there can be no doubt that this event, took place in Salem, Massachusetts, and not in Salisbury, England. His father

was a weaver, not a mariner, and we have him and his family definitely located in Salem for some years before and immediately after Joseph's birth. I had some hope of finding a birth record in Salisbury, Massachusetts, which is located reasonably near Salem and might have been even closer in the old days of fewer and larger towns. But I was doomed to disappointment. There was no record there.

We can imagine that life was hard for young Joseph, who was only about a year old when his father died, leaving an estate amounting to 153 lbs 12 S including the building which served as home and workshop combined, valued at 75 lbs., 9 acres of other land valued at 35 lbs., a horse, cow, and sow at 15 lbs-10-0, 2 weaver's looms and tackling, 5 lbs, 10 S. He also left books, a Gunters scale, two guns, a "sword, Baggonett belt and cartouche". Joseph's oldest brother William was thirteen at this time, his sisters Hannah, eleven, Elizabeth eight, and Mary, six, all of record, while his brother Benjamin, if Tradition speaks correctly, was only three. Hannah Rotch, Sr. did not marry again for many years, not until just after Joseph's thirteenth birthday, at which time she chose a man who speaks with affection of his step-sons. We do not know what drove the Rotches from Salem to the Cape. It may have been this second marriage. It may have been religion, or perhaps just wanderlust. At any rate, all three of the sons reached that part of Massachusetts early in life, and after sojourns in Boston and perhaps Braintree, it was from Falmouth that our young shoemaker sailed in a Wood Sloop to make his fortune. Tradition has placed this Falmouth in England, but I am sure that it was right here on Buzzards Bay.

We know a little of his personality. He, we are told, "was a man of great activity and shrewdness in business, his manner quick and vivacious. He was determined, and at the same time had a pleasing address, consequently he generally had his own way in everything. He was full of unostentatious benevolence, and preferred the recipient of his bounty should remain in ignorance of the hand that gave. He delighted in a joke, and was singularly ready in repartee." This jokester with a loud sneeze seems to have left an impression very different from that left by his eldest son, who clothed himself in solemn dignity. But both were extraordinarily able and courageous men.

When Joseph Rotch reached Nantucket about 1725 he started in to work at his trade, and to earn and save money. He was then, we are told, located on Main Street. Later he bought a schooner, probably not such a boat as we now identify by that name. Whether he had given up his trade of cobbler and became a merchant before his marriage, I do not know. On the second of the twelfth month called February, according to the Nantucket records, in the year 1733, (what would now be the second of the second month, 1734) he had stepped up in the world by marrying Love Macy, daughter of Thomas and Deborah Coffin Macy, a descendant of Nantucket's oldest families. She was, of course, a Quaker and so, by this time at any rate, was Joseph. I do not think he was ever so devout a Quaker as was his son William. He never used Quaker terminology in his deeds nor did he in his will. Probably he did not draw these instruments himself but he must have read them. And he never bothered to change January to First month, or July to Seventh. In fact I do not believe he had been a Quaker before he went to Nantucket. The descendants of the first Benjamin Rotch can tell me of no Quaker tradition in their family, and among the muster rolls, of Dartmouth is one of a Fairhaven company up to August 1st, 1775, which includes the name of Benjamin Rotch, undoubtedly the son of William Rotch of Rochester. This minute man, Benjamin, was a great-nephew of Joseph and was born October 20, 1755. There were few, if any, Quakers among the soldiers of the Revolution.

Though the date of Joseph's change of occupation is unascertainable, it appears that he boarded his own boat and sailed her, or had her sailed, to the coast of Spain. Was he searching for more of those silk handkerchiefs which had given him such an auspicious start in life? Apparently not, for we are told he took out cargoes of oil, bone, fish, etc., and went to the West Indies and came back with new sugar, molasses, rum, brandy and wines. Some reports say Joseph Rotch later commanded his own vessel, but all agree he started by hiring a sailing master, a "Superior sailor found among his own townsmen." Certainly his nephew, who bore his exact name, was a sea captain, and sailed for him in later years, but this young Joseph was only twenty-one in 1754 when apparently our Joseph was in command of his own vessel in the Bay of Biscay, and lost overboard, Abraham Macy of Nantucket, probably a rela-

tive of his wife. After this unhappy event Joseph Rotch Sr., we are told, "remained on shore and sent his then numerous ships in charge of other Commanders of his own making." We are also told that he became very opulent for those times. Certainly the Nantucket land records show that he acquired much of the island, there being fifty-three grants of land to him there between 1735 and 1769.

The first deed, dated the twenty-seventh day of August in the ninth year of the reign of George the Second of Great Britain, Anno Domini 1735, was from William Worth cooper, to Joseph Rotch of Sherborn on Nantucket, mariner. It conveyed only eight rods in Sherborn, to the northward of the first lot at Wesco, and bounded on the east by the land of Solomon Gardner, on the north by the highway, on the west by the land of Nathaniel Worth, measuring forty-one feet on the northern and thirty-nine feet on the southern end. Joseph, paid eighty pounds in good bills of credit for it. Evidently the young mariner, already married for three years, had progressed considerably in his first ten years in the village then known as Sherborn, but now called simply Nantucket. It was seventeen years later, in 1752, that he is first described in a deed as a merchant, and this was two years before he actually quit the sea.

Probably when Joseph retired from active participation in the navigation of his own ships, at the age of fifty, he expected to spend the rest of his life in Sherborn. We know little of his life at this time and nothing of his reason for acquiring extensive holdings on the mainland. Perhaps eleven years of life in the quiet and prosperous island community palled on one who had seen so many foreign coasts. At any rate, in 1765 he took the step that was destined to make such a difference to the whaling industry of Nantucket and New Bedford, for in that year he purchased a large part of what is now the center of the latter city, and also a great piece of the present town of Fairhaven.

It has been said in early histories of New Bedford that Joseph Rotch wished to settle in Fairhaven, but as he was unable to purchase land on the water, chose New Bedford. This does not seem to be so. Of course, in those days there was no Fairhaven and no New Bedford, just the town of Dartmouth. The story of Old Dartmouth, as it is now known, has been told many times. The land,

which was named for one of the ports in England at which the Pilgrims had stopped when starting their epochial voyage, had been purchased from the Indians in 1652, for "thirty yards of cloth, eight mooseskins, fifteen axes, fifteen hoes, fifteen pair of breeches, two settles, one cloak, 2 lb. of wampum, eight pair stockings, eight pair of shoes, one iron pot, and ten shillings in another comodite," commonly supposed to be rum, by John Cooke and others of the original Pilgrims and their associates. The deed was signed by Wamsutta, son of Massasoit and brother of Philip. Very few of the purchasers came to live in this new territory, but among those who did was John Cooke, who became the patriarch of the region, dying in what is now Oxford, or North Fairhaven, in 1695. The Town of Dartmouth extended from a point three miles east of the Cushenagg River to the west bound of the Coaxet River. No north bound was given, but the town came to include what is now Fairhaven, Acushnet, New Bedford, Dartmouth and most of Westport. It seems to have included three territories, named for three of its so-called rivers, the Acushnet, the Apponegansett, and the Acoaxet, though the Pascamansett, more of a river than the first two, and the seat of one of the earliest settlements seems seldom to have been mentioned. The town was very sparsely settled. There was a village at what is now known as Russells Mills and another at that part of New Bedford and Acushnet known as "The Head of the River," the latter of which was situated on the road from Plymouth to Newport. The settlers of Dartmouth lived mostly on scattered farms. They were dissenters from the established church of Plymouth, and it was probably because of their religious beliefs that they left the comparative security of the original town to settle in the western wilds. They were mostly Quakers or Baptists, those in the southern part of the town belonging to the former faith, and those in the northern part to the latter. John Cooke was a Baptist preacher. He was also evidently a fighter, for he maintained a garrison on the eastern shore of the Acushnet, while Joseph Russell maintained one, the foundations of which can still be seen, near the head of the Apponegansett, just off what is now Elm Street in Padanaram. It was to these garrisons that the farmers and their families fled when King Philip's braves laid waste the countryside in one of the first of their terrible raids. The Pilgrim fathers,

though differing from their aristocratic Puritan neighbors in Boston, were nearly as intolerant, and smugly explained the raid as a punishment inflicted by God because the citizens of Dartmouth had refused to have an established church. The impression gained from reading early documents is that there was no church at all in Dartmouth, for the Quaker and Baptist meetings were not regarded by the Pilgrim fathers. King Philip's war in this locality terminated in the betrayal of the Indians, who, contrary to the word given them, were marched off to Plymouth and slavery over what is now County Street. If my hearers are interested in these early days, they should turn to Daniel Ricketson's *History of New Bedford*, "Certain Come-overers" by Henry H. Crapo, the records of the First Congregational Society in New Bedford, and to many other works, for it is not my purpose here to retell what has often been told.

After King Philip's war the settlement flourished for nearly a hundred years. About 1760 a descendant of Joseph Russell, of garrison fame, also named Joseph, was occupying a large farm on the west side of the Acushnet River. His rambling farm house stood on the west side of the old Indian trail now known as County Street, on a spot later occupied by the mansion of Charles W. Morgan, now the site of the New Bedford High School. What later became Union Street was Joseph Russell's cart path to the shore, and it is said that a red gate shut off this cart path from the old road. Little villages had recently sprung up on the easterly side of the river or harbor, one on the shore near what is now Washington Street in Fairhaven and one in that part of the last-mentioned town now known as Oxford. Joseph Russell, besides his farm owned some small vessels which he sent whaling. Evidently he was an enterprising man, and decided to plot his own farm land and see if he could not have a village like the one across the harbor. He laid out Union Street and Water Street, the former known then as "the main street" and the latter as "the first street from the water", and divided the land into house lots. In 1760 the first of these, an acre in size, located just south of the "four corners" (the intersection of Union and Water Streets) was sold to John Loudon, a caulker by trade. He built on this, in 1761, a house which was burned by the British seventeen years later. The water reached to this lot and Loudon intended to build ships there. Three or four other houses were erected in the

neighborhood in the next three or four years. There was one wharf and a try-house.

Into this peaceful scene came Joseph Rotch. I quote from "History of New Bedford" by L. B. Ellis:

"Under the mighty impetus given by this energetic business man, with his abundant means and skillful methods, the wheels of industry began to move. Houses and shops multiplied, highways were opened, wharves were built, the population increased, and the river front became the center of an active business. Under a grove of buttonwood trees that stood by the river bank near the spot where now is Hazard's Wharf (Front Street, end of Hazard's Lane) the keel of the first ship was laid." This was in 1767 and the ship was the famous "Dartmouth."

Joseph Rotch made two large purchases almost simultaneously. He bought from Joseph Russell on "May 28th in the fifth year of the Reign of King George the Third, Anno Domini one thousand, seven hundred and sixty-five" the Ten Acre Lot, which extended from a point just east of the present Pleasant Street, down both sides of what is now William Street to the water. Two days later he bought from Elnathan Pope an eighty-six acre tract in Fairhaven, starting on the water just north of what is now Spring Street (extended west) and running up this street to the neighborhood of what is now Summer Street, and then southward to about the present railroad location, thence eastward to a point about a hundred and thirty feet east of Main Street, northward on this line to a point just south of Spring Street and then westward into the water. The water frontage was no more than a hundred feet, if that, but this great farm effectually hemmed in the little village of Fairhaven and prevented it from developing until about 1830 when the Rotch heirs began for the first time to sell. In August 1765 Joseph Rotch bought of Joseph Russell nineteen other lots in what is now New Bedford, six of which were "water lots", and in the following October he acquired nine more "water lots" from Reuben Delano, formerly belonging to Elnathan Pope. Thereafter during the next two or three years he acquired many other parcels.

When Joseph Rotch first bought in Dartmouth he may or may not have intended to settle there. He was well along in years,

sixty-one, and he was leaving a thriving and presumably congenial community to take up his abode on an almost deserted hillside. Others from Nantucket owned land on the mainland. The large tract just south of the Rotch farm in Fairhaven belonged to the Macys, undoubtedly relatives of Love Rotch. There was little wood in Nantucket and much of the land was owned in common, "sheep commons" as it was known. Perhaps the desire to own woodland and extensive acreage drove the Islanders to Dartmouth. Undoubtedly Joseph Rotch wished to be on a good harbor, for it is said he was very insistent on having deep water at his lots. His plan may have been to own where he could build ships, or perhaps he was just entering into a land speculation, with no intention of actually leaving his island home. He was not the first Rotch in the vicinity of the Acushnet River, though this fact will probably be news to most of my hearers. His nephew William Rotch, born in 1729, oldest son of his brother Benjamin, had settled in Mattapoissett, or Rochester, as it was then called, and was married there to Anne Barlow on November 17th, 1754. He was a shipwright by trade, and was undoubtedly friendly with his uncle. He is said to have moved to Tisbury on Martha's Vineyard two years after Joseph bought in Dartmouth, settling at Lambert's Cove in 1767, though I find evidences of him and his family on the mainland later than that. It was from him that the Vineyard Rotches descend.

In Joseph's earliest deeds of Dartmouth land he is always described as "Joseph Rotch of Sherborn in the island of Nantucket, merchant", (usually spelled "marchant"). It was not until November 29, 1769, that he first describes himself as being "of Dartmouth". And tradition tells us that Love Rotch never came to Dartmouth to live. She died November 14, 1767, and is buried in Nantucket in the Friends Burying ground at the head of Main Street. Five days after her death he still referred to himself as a resident of Sherborn. So probably it was 1768 before Joseph Rotch actually settled in the little village just springing up in Dartmouth, to which he had already given the name of "Bedford". The family name of the Duke of Bedford in England was Russell, and Joseph Rotch suggested this name for the new settlement growing up at the foot of the farm of Joseph Russell. The name soon came into general use. In Rotch deeds as early as 1767 we find land described as being

“situate in Bedford so-called” or “at a place called Bedford”. It was first mentioned in the Dartmouth town records in connection with the building of a workhouse in 1773. Later it became known that a town in Middlesex County already bore the name of Bedford, so the village, when separated from Dartmouth in 1787, was incorporated under the name of New Bedford. But in the correspondence of the early Rotches, the prefix “New” was never used except in the address, and as “Bedford” the village settlement was known colloquially for nearly half a century.

It was on Rotch’s Hill, so-called, in Bedford, long since nearly leveled, that Joseph Rotch made his home. The house stood on the west side of Water Street just south of William, and from its windows Joseph could look down what is now Hamilton Street to his wharves. Two of Joseph’s children settled in Bedford with him, Joseph Rotch, Jr. and Francis Rotch. Joseph and Love are said to have had thirteen children, of whom William, born December 4, 1734, (great confusion is caused because December was the 10th month, old style, and the Quaker method of numbers is confusing) was the eldest and Francis, born September 30, 1750, was the youngest, Joseph, Jr. born October 27, 1743, was the only other to live. Ten died, probably in infancy, and though I have searched the Nantucket birth records, I cannot find their names. William had married Elizabeth Barney December 31st, 1754, and was the father of three or four children before his adventurous parent set out for the mainland. He was already well established in the whale fishery on the island, and was not able to come to Bedford for many years. Joseph Rotch, Jr. was between 22 and 25 and Francis Rotch between 15 and 18 at the time of the removal.

Their whaling firm in Bedford was known as Joseph Rotch and Sons, though probably at first only Joseph and Joseph, Jr. were its members. In 1769 these two obtained an execution against Jonathan Smith, Blacksmith, in the sum of 75 pounds, sixteen shillings, five pence, for which they were given a lot “a little to ye west of Bedford, a place so called in Dartmouth, with part of a dwelling house standing thereon.” The ownership in parts of houses was constantly being dealt in in those days. It was not until March 30, 1772 that Francis first appears in the records. He was twenty-one by that time and is described as a “marchant” in a deed by which

he, Joseph his brother, and his father received the strip of land on which they built a rope-walk which was later to be burned by the British. It was only a year later that young Francis, having already been to England, and then living in Boston, had the trying experience of acting as managing owner of the ship "Dartmouth" when she arrived in Boston conveying the famous tea.

The building of the "Dartmouth," already once or twice referred to, was one of Joseph Rotch's first acts after purchasing his Bedford land. She was built in 1767, the first ship to be launched in Bedford. Both Daniel Ricketson in his "History of New Bedford" and the tablet recently erected on Front Street at the foot of Hazard to mark the spot where she was launched, refer to Francis Rotch as being her owner. His widow, a hundred years after the event, used to insist the ship was the property of Francis, and Francis alone. Undoubtedly in 1772 he had become a member of the Rotch firm in Bedford, and as a member was the managing owner resident in Boston two years later. But is it likely that the ship was built by him at the age of sixteen or seventeen? I feel certain that Joseph Rotch was the builder of the "Dartmouth", probably sharing her ownership at first with his son Joseph Junior.

A Dartmouth tax list of 1771 throws some light on Joseph Rotch's importance in Dartmouth a few years after his arrival. I will give extracts from the Morning Mercury of September 18, 1924, being a reprint of a paper prepared for the Roundabout Club of Fairhaven by Marion H. Campbell, concerning the rate till or tax list of 1771. This is labelled "The Fairhaven Taxes, 1771" and is in the library in Fairhaven, but covers the whole Town of Dartmouth and not just the village of Fairhaven.

"We are talking now of the region bordering the Acushnet River in 1771. Please sit up and be surprised.

"In this community then there were 321 dwelling houses, 123 barns, 71 corn houses, 184 horse kind, 318 oxen, 1243 cows, 2947 sheep (of these 42 were labelled sheep and goats), 473 swine, 2484 A. of pasturage, 815½ A. of tilled land and 9217 bushels of corn raised, 337 prospective barrels of cider, 583½ A. of salt marsh that cut 40¼ tons of salt hay, 148½ A. of fresh marsh cutting 98¾ T. and 2026 A. sown with English or upland grass cutting 1079½

T. There were 119 shops, warehouses, etc., 8 servants or slaves, 3059 $\frac{1}{4}$ T. of shipping owned here and 30,684 ft. of wharfage.

The list shows that there were 3 grist mills, about 50 men who had shops, and a few who had two shops.

“Seth Maston, J. Rotch, Hix Jenne, Seth Jenne and Zevoiah Wood had shed houses assessed. Jonathan Taber and J. Rotch had lumber houses. John Louden and Frederick French, bake houses.

“Joseph Rotch is taxed for a rope walk, Jonathan Hathaway, Jonathan Taylor, and James Smith for cooper shops. Wesson Tallman and William Tallman each for a “Taylor” shop and the last named also for a “marchant shop”. Hannah West, widow, had a shoemaker shop as did Isaac Weston, and Thomas Wrightenton had a “hatter” shop.

“Isaac Howland owned $\frac{1}{2}$ a candle works and Joseph Russell is taxed for $\frac{1}{2}$ a spermacetti works.

“Richard Delano owned $\frac{1}{3}$ a ware house, Zarah Eldredge $\frac{1}{3}$ and Zeviah Wood $\frac{1}{3}$; John Peckens and Thos. Hathaway each $\frac{1}{4}$. John McPherson, Joseph Russell, Isaac Howland and John Louden each owned a whole warehouse and Joseph Rotch three.

“Another sign of prosperity is shown in the number of feet of wharfage owned here, 30,684 feet and still another in the number of tons of vessels owned, 3059 $\frac{1}{4}$. Joseph or J. Rotch owned by far the most of each. He was assessed for 14,944 feet of wharf and 673 T. of vessel. In one entry in the rate bills it says John Peckens owned $\frac{1}{16}$ of the sloop Ranger or 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ T., and $\frac{1}{7}$ of a wharf or 500 feet. Of course wharves and ships varied in size in those days but still it gives us some idea—and on that basis J. Rotch at that date owned the equivalent of 4 large wharves and 10 ships.

“71 men are assessed as owners of shipping—and 20 of these and 1 other owned the wharfage. All but about 74 of the inhabitants of the town tilled their land and cared for their livestock in addition to their trade. They were farmers and land owners first—carpenters, chair makers, boat builders, merchants, weavers, tanners, tailors, blacksmiths, bakers, seamen, shoemakers—everything besides. They appear practically independent but no great fortunes in money had yet been gained by them. 43 of them at least, though, had

sums of money from 4£ to 4000£ in Trading stock or at interest. Of course the wealthiest man of the times was J. Rotch who had the larger above-named sum invested in stock and 1500£ at interest besides. Barnabas and Joseph Russell were the next largest money holders at this date, each having 750£ at interest. Timothy Ingraham had 65£ in factorage and David Spencer had 150£ invested in part of a West India cargo."

Though the village of Bedford, included above in "Cusnet", was destined to be almost completely destroyed by the British seven years later, it soon recovered and today the territory included in the above enumeration has more than 125,000 inhabitants, very few of whom, I am afraid, have ever heard of Joseph Rotch. Most of you who are here have, of course, some idea who he was, but you probably do not realize that in that year 1771 there were three men by that name living in Bedford, Old Joseph, his son, Joseph Rotch, Jr. mentioned above, and his nephew, Captain Joseph Rotch, who had come to the village from Boston in 1767 and built a house on Water Street just south of the Ten Acre lot. This last Joseph, son of Benjamin, sailed as master of one of his uncle's ships for many years. The arrival of these three Josephs and young Francis comprised what has since been referred to as "the first coming of the Rotches."

Joseph Rotch was not long a widower. In fact his remarriage may have had something to do with his permanent removal from Sherborn to Bedford. On December 29th, 1768, he married Rebecca, the widow of Gideon Cornell. She had evidently been living in Philadelphia, as can be seen from Joseph's will, and there her daughter had married Clement Biddle. She, with Jane Rotch, the wife of Captain Joseph, and the latter's infant daughter, Nancy, made up the whole family of pre-Revolutionary Rotches permanently in Bedford, although one of the William Rotches signed as witness to a document attesting that a man-slave named Venter, aged about 46, had purchased his freedom from his owners Elnathan Samson and John Chaffee in Dartmouth on July 9, 1770 for twenty-one pounds six shillings five pence.

As I have just mentioned Joseph Rotch Jr., and as we are gathered in the meeting house, it seems desirable to leave our subject for a minute and mention briefly the connection of this building

with the Rotch family. The Sunday Standard, on April 8, 1923, states "Though Dartmouth had a meeting house as early as 1669, (on the site of the present Apponegansett Meeting House) no meetings were held in the neighborhood where the centre of New Bedford now stands until 1772, when the Friends began to congregate for worship in various houses."

In connection with this it is interesting to read the will of Joseph Rotch, Junior, written the last mentioned year, just before his death at the age of twenty-nine.

I will read it:

In the Name of God, Amen.

I, Joseph Rotch junr. of Dartmouth in the County of Bristol, in the Province of Massachusetts Bay in New England, Merchant, being (God be praised) of sound mind and memory, Do make my last Will & Testament as follows, that is to say

I Will that all my just Debts be paid

Item. I give and Devise unto my Brother Francis Rotch My Brick Warehouse & Land in Boston which formerly belonged to Leonard Jarvis Esq., To Hold to my said Brother Francis & his heirs and assigns forever.

Item. I Give the sum of One hundred Pounds lawful money, to be paid and applyed towards building a Friends Meeting house, at or near Bedford in Dartmouth, said Meeting house to be erected in such place as shall be approved of by my Father, & my said Brother

Item. I give and bequeath unto my Sister in Law Rebecca Cornel the sum of Two hundred pounds lawful money to be paid her at her Marriage.

Item. All the Residue and Remainder of my Estate, Real Personal & Mixt of every sort and Kind & wheresoever the same is situated, lying and being, I give, Devise, and Bequeath unto my two Brothers, William Rotch, and Francis Rotch. To hold to them & their heirs & assigns forever in equal Moiety, and half parts without Benefit of Survivorship.

The Reason I have in this my Will given to my Brother Francis more than to my Brother William is that my Brother Fran-

cis might thereby be nearer on an equality with him as to Worldly Estate. My brother William has a full share of my Love, Esteem, and Fraternal Regard.

Lastly I do hereby Nominate and Appoint my said Brothers William Rotch and Francis Rotch to be Executors of this my last Will and Testament, hereby revoking all former Wills by me at any time heretofore made. In Witness whereof I hereto set my hand & seal this eighth day of May, A. D. One thousand seven hundred and seventy-two.

Jos. Rotch Junr.

Signed, sealed, published &
declared by the said Joseph
Rotch Junr. to be his last Will
& Testament in presence of us.

Leod. Jarvis
Sam Gardner Jarvis
Charles Jarvis

Suffolk, ss. By the honble. Foster Hutchinson, N. J.

Judge of Probate D. C.

The aforewritten Will, being presented for Probate by Francis Rotch, one of ye. Executors therein named, Leonard Jarvis, & Charles Jarvis made Oath that they saw Joseph Rotch Junr. Subscribe to this Instrument, Sign & Seal it, and heard him publish and declare it to be his last Will & Testament, & that when he so did, he was of sound Mind & Memory, according to these Deponents best discerning, & that they (together with Saml. Gardner Jarvis now absent) set their hands as Witnesses thereof, in said testator's presence.

J. Hutchinson

Boston 3. April 1773.

(Seal of Probate Court)

After making the will, Joseph Jr. went to England in search of health which he did not find.

The old building, originally standing on this lot, but now situated diagonally across Seventh Street, was built in 1785, and may

well have been started, and surely was planned, before the death of Joseph Sr. at the end of 1784.

I have not seen the record, but probably Joseph Jr.'s hundred pounds went into its construction, and I have no doubt but that other Rotch money also helped, though it was actually built during the two years that no Rotch except Capt. Joseph was living in Bedford.

The old building was replaced in 1821 by the one in which we are now seated, and the first service was held here in December 1822. I have read that William Rotch Sr. older brother of the Joseph who gave the hundred pounds, contributed to the fund for the construction of this building, and have no doubt that his son, William Jr., and his son-in-law, Samuel Rodman, and very likely other members of the family did so likewise. I am sorry I have not the records before me. The family was strongly Quaker at this time and Thomas Rotch, another son of William Sr. and grandson of Joseph, the subject of this talk, was then a missionary of this faith in far-off Ohio, as was his wife, Charity Rodman Rotch. It was for meeting in this very spot that William was leaving when Daniel Ricketson in "New Bedford of the Past." depicts him as follows:

"New Bedford in 1822 was only a small place of perhaps some six or eight thousand inhabitants, and like Nantucket had a character of its own that marked it from other towns of New England, owing in a good degree to the influence of the Friends, who in the foundation of our place and up to this period included most of our wealthy families. Leaving the wharves, the old warehouses, sail lofts, and shops, let us wend our way up the street—old Main Street, now Union. Here we see a fine mansion overlooking its humbler neighbors, with its handsome row of the then favorite Lombardy poplars, with its front yard and ample entrance, a stately mansion with broad grounds, stables and outbuildings, with all the appointments and appliances of wealth and comfort. It is a meeting day of the Friends. In front of the house is seen a plain but handsome coach, with a sleek and fine looking pair of bay horses, a colored driver of respectable appearance, and another servant at the open carriage door. The door of the mansion opens, and a courtly, venerable looking gentleman appears, an advanced octogenarian, tall, and with long silvery locks, his dress of the true William Penn order,—

a drab beaver, drab suit, the long coat and waistcoat, knee-breeches with silver buckles, and shoes also with silver buckles,—his step a little faltering but still graceful, and becoming one who had stood before ministers and kings in the Old World—a meek and truly devout disciple, nevertheless, of the Saviour of men, a genuine philanthropist. Let us see him in his carriage, sitting with patriarchal dignity, and follow him to the Old Friends Meeting House of wood, on Spring Street, the predecessor of the present one of brick. Seated in the “gallery,” or high seat, at “the head of the meeting”, his very presence seems calculated to inspire a respect for the principles of peace he so truly inculcated both by precept and example. My older readers will recognize this as a portraiture of the William Rotch, Sr.”

Daniel Ricketson says he was writing of the year 1822. Had he checked his dates he would have found that this very meeting house was then being opened. And for the last six years of his life it was in this building, (probably in the seat I now so unworthily occupy) that William Rotch, Sr. sat.

Later on, when theological differences were causing strife among the Friends, the Rotches took the more liberal view, and Daniel Ricketson writes of their final separation from this meeting as follows:

“During the palmy days of the Society of Friends, i. e. anterior to the great schism, William Rotch, Jr. (son of the William Rotch just mentioned and grandson of our Joseph) was a prominent and useful member — in fact a large portion of the expenses of the society here and elsewhere were borne by him and his brother-in-law, Samuel Rodman, Sr. When the division in the Society took place, this worthy and estimable man, with most if not all of his family, were “disowned” by the so-called orthodox portion, who held the balance of power and thus became possessors of the property of the Society. It was indeed a sad sight to see this fine old Quaker gentleman in his handsome brown clothes, with the old-fashioned knee breeches and long gaiters, walking by the meeting he had so long attended as a highly honored member, to meet a few of the disowned like himself at the old Lyceum building.”

And now to return to Joseph Rotch, Sr. in early Bedford.

Many chapters have been written of Dartmouth's part in the Revolution. I will tell only enough here to complete my story.

The first naval exploit and capture recorded in the Revolutionary Annals was made by Fairhaven men off Bedford harbor May 13, 1775. Captain Nathaniel Pope re-captured two provincial sloops that had been taken by the British sloop-of-war "Falcon", one of the vessels that was to attack Bunker Hill just a month later. Fifteen British marines were taken prisoners and brought to land.

It was in this connection that I find the only reference to Joseph Rotch's acts during the Revolution that has come to my notice. I quote from Ricketson's "History of New Bedford":

"Joseph Rotch, Edward Pope, and many others came from Bedford on Monday morning, and held counsel with some of the timid at the house of Esquire Williams, and concluded to send the prisoners and captured sloop, with an apology, back to the "Falcon"; but the captors were on the *qui vive*, and marched off the prisoners for Taunton."

Insofar as Bedford was Quaker, it did not approve of war and bloodshed, no matter what the consequences. The trouble this conscientious objecting made for Joseph's son William, is a story in itself. Of Joseph's feeling we know less. His ownership of the tea ship "Dartmouth" was chance, and did not indicate Tory leanings. But though he was a less strict Quaker than his eldest son, he was a ship owner and probably had much the same feeling as to the sea fighting. His commerce was ruined. The people in Fairhaven at that time, as later, were zealous patriots and very warlike, a characteristic so different from their neighbors in Bedford that the two towns separated during the war of 1812; and the passage quoted above shows that Joseph's sympathies were entirely with his Bedford neighbors. At any rate, whatever his actions during the Revolution may have been, he seems to have been singled out for considerable punishment when the British decided to retaliate for Dartmouth's harboring of the privateers that swarmed in the Acushnet.

John Paul Jones was a frequent visitor to these waters, and while in command of the "Providence" brought her into Bedford with her sides running blood after a victory over a superior British vessel. The Mercury, years ago, stated: "the wounded of the crew who died were brought on shore and interred in a small hillock that rose near the shore a short distance north of the spot once occupied

by the wheel house of William Rotch's ropewalk." This was the ropewalk of Joseph Rotch and his sons Joseph and Francis, above referred to. The sailor's bones have since been moved to Oak Grove Cemetery.

In August 1778, it was rumored that the enemy were coming. Eleven cannon were mounted at or near Fort Phoenix in Fairhaven and two on Clarke's Point. But these poor defenses were entirely inadequate. A battle of the British and French fleets off Point Judith had been interrupted by a fearful storm. The French had sailed to Boston for repairs and the British had gathered at New London. Sir Henry Clinton in a dispatch dated September 15 said:

"I left the fleet, directing Major General Gray to proceed to Bedford, a noted rendezvous for privateers, etc., and in which there were a number of captured ships at the time." Gray, an ancestor of Sir Edward Gray of World War fame, brought with him a formidable part of the fleet; two frigates, one of them with forty guns, an eighteen-gun brig, and thirty-six transports, loaded with four thousand British regulars. Into Clarke's Cove they sailed on the morning of September 5th, 1778. It was near nightfall before the host was all landed. With General Gray was a young dispatch bearer, Captain John Andre, later to pay with his life for Arnold's treachery. Up County Street marched the British army, meeting no resistance, as the artillery company of 80 men stationed in Bedford had gone that day to get a new gun at Stone Bridge. The occupants of the farm houses fled precipitously to the dense woods that bounded County Street on the west, taking what household goods they could with them. Many amusing and tragic anecdotes are told of the events of this day. They can be found in all the histories of New Bedford. It is not my plan to tell them here, but some of the records of eye-witnesses preserved in "History of New Bedford" edited by Mr. Pease give me an opportunity to digress again for a moment and to call attention to a parallel which has especial interest for me.

These records were carefully collected sixty years or so after the event by a young man recently come from Dartmouth to New Bedford, whose career bore such resemblance to that of Joseph Rotch that I think it worth mentioning; Henry H. Crapo, later governor of Michigan. There were two preeminent Rotches who moulded

the early history of New Bedford, Joseph and his eldest son, William; and exactly a hundred years later there were two preeminent Crapos, who took a firm hand on the reins that guided the growing city just as the grip of the Rotches was beginning to weaken. Henry Howland Crapo, born in 1804, came to New Bedford about 1830, a young man, just as Joseph Rotch had gone to Nantucket. He had scant means and little influence on his arrival, but was willing to turn his hand to any useful task and his name is writ deep in the city's history as surveyor, auctioneer and city officer. Steadily his influence grew. He had a son, William W. Crapo, who like Joseph's son William, began to make a place for himself early in life. In the late 1850's James Arnold, who had married Sarah Rotch, became interested in a mortgage on some woodland in Michigan. He wished Henry Crapo to examine it for him, but the elder Crapo could not spare the time. His son William, just out of Yale and Harvard Law School, was sent instead, and returned with a favorable report. Mr. Arnold made his investment, sharing it with the Hathaways and Henry Crapo; and William Crapo started the practice of law in New Bedford. But things did not go well with the mortgage. It was obvious that it must be foreclosed and that someone must go to the wilds of Michigan to preserve the holdings. The Rotches were no longer pioneers, nor were the Hathaways. Henry Crapo, however, was not daunted. He was nearly sixty, much the same age as had been Joseph Rotch when he came to the wilds of Dartmouth. Henry Crapo left his son, already established in business, at home, and departed with his younger children to start an entirely new life, just as had the first of the Rotches. And in those Michigan woods he succeeded and prospered amazingly, as had Joseph in Dartmouth's woods a century earlier. And a war came to plague him, too; but not as it did poor Joseph. For the Civil War added to the fame of the Governor of Michigan.

And my parallel continues, for the younger Crapo went forward steadily through his long life. In Congress, in the high circles of the Republican party, in finance, and positions of trust, he was always a leader. As whale ships brought William Rotch into conflicts and conferences with those in power in Great Britain, so whale ships brought William Crapo into conflict and conference with those in power in Great Britain nearly a century later, for if the young

congressman from New Bedford had not fought a seemingly impossible fight through Congress there probably would have been no tribunal meeting at Geneva to make Great Britain pay the Alabama Claims. Joseph Rotch and his sons made New Bedford the foremost whaling port in the world. William Crapo, a hundred and fifty years later, gave to the city the impressive statue to commemorate the dead industry.

Guided by Governor Crapo's accurate records, we were following the British troops up County Street, when we left them for a moment. At the corner of Union, then the main street, just at dusk, the force divided. Some wheeled to the eastward down the hill, and the rest continued on up County Street. These latter were fired upon from the woods, to the west, and lost two men. They retaliated by killing three armed Americans at or near the corner of North and County, proceeded around the head of the river and blew up the fort on the Fairhaven side. The first party marched into the heart of Bedford village and freely applied the torch. It is said that it was the intention to burn only shipping, wharves, and commercial houses, but no effort was made to save the ten or eleven houses that happened to catch. Among these were those of Joseph Rotch and his nephew Captain Joseph, situated close together on Water Street. Joseph Rotch, the elder, also lost a barn, a chaise house and a ropewalk, and the firm of Rotch and Jarvis a shop and two warehouses. It was a gorgeous night, with a full moon. By nine o'clock the village and the shipping were in flames. It must have been an awe-inspiring sight. The property destroyed was valued at one hundred and five thousand pounds.

The little fire engine, Independence No. 1, which had been built in 1772 in London and purchased by Joseph Rotch, must have been helpless. It is said there were only fifteen men in the village capable of bearing arms at the time of the attack, for the Dartmouth men were away in their companies, some at Stone Bridge and others further off. Probably this number did not include the many Quakers, who would not bear arms, but who undoubtedly would have manned the engine, if we can judge by the actions of Benjamin Rotch at the siege of Dunkirk a few years later. Undoubtedly no one even attempted to use Independence No. 1 that awful night,

however, for the buckets hung in the houses and almost every house had been deserted.

We know little of Joseph Rotch's shipping during the war. It would seem that the old firm of Joseph Rotch and Sons had been dissolved and that perhaps the senior partner had retired, for Francis Rotch and Leonard Jarvis of Dartmouth had formed a partnership. Between August 1775 and January 1776 this new firm filed bonds with the State treasurer for six brigantines and one brig. None of these vessels, however, was among the seventy burned by the British. No vessel is recorded as having gone whaling from New Bedford from January 1776 until 1785. Joseph Rotch was not living in his old house on Rotch's Hill at the time it was burned. It was occupied by Joseph Austen, the father-in-law of Cornelius Grinnell. But I doubt if he had already left the town. Tradition says the Rotches did not go back to Nantucket until after the burning of Bedford, and I find that the house in which Joseph Rotch later lived on the west side of Bethel Hill at the corner of Union Street had been built before the Revolution. This house was torn down to make room for the Thornton block in the eighteen-fifties, and I know little of it, but it may have been built by Joseph as a more permanent home after his first few years in Bedford. However, there is one account in Henry Worth's book on old houses that says this Union Street house which appears to have been smaller, was Joseph's first house, and that he moved from it to the big one on Water Street. This would seem probable if it were not for this story about Joseph Austen. And I have always heard from my old friend Tradition that the Water Street house was the first. It was on the foundations of the Water Street house that William Rotch Jr. built what is now the Mariner's Home when he came to New Bedford in 1788, ten years after the fire.

There is little more to tell. I know nothing of Joseph's life for the next five years in Nantucket. On March 25th, 1782, he returned to Bedford. He was then seventy-eight, and probably alone except for his wife. Francis had been living abroad, though he was back in Boston soon after his father's death, perhaps called back to look after his interests in the estate. This second sojourn was to last but a little over two and half years, for on November 24, 1784, Joseph Rotch died, in his eighty-first year. He had made his will

three months earlier being "Weak of Body" and so perhaps in his last sickness. I give it here, just as it was written:

"I Joseph Rotch of Dartmouth in the County of Bristol & Commonwealth of Massachusetts Mercht. Being weak of Body but of sound Mind Memory & Understanding; do make publish & declare this my last Will & Testament in manner & form following viz,

Imprimis My Will is that all my just Debts and Funeral charges be paid & discharged by my Executor hereafter named.

Item Whereas there was a Covenant or agreement entered into & made by & between my present Wife Rebecca Rotch & myself before our Marriage by which (if she survives me) she is to receive one hundred pounds out of my Estate & twenty pounds a Year during the time she remains my Widow & she in consideration thereof relinquishes her right of Dower & Power of thirds in whatever Estate I shall leave at my decease. Now my Will is that my two Sons William & Francis pay to my said Wife Ten pounds yearly & every year she remains my Widow in addition to the above said Twenty pounds & likewise that my Executor hereafter named at my decease supply & provide her with a suitable Room to live in either in Bedford or Nantucket & that he furnish the same in a suitable manner for her in her Station & the expense thereof to be equally born by my said Two Sons & on her ceasing, by Death or otherwise, to be my Widow the furniture to revert back to my sd. two Sons. But if it should be my Wife's choice to remove to Philadelphia it is my Will that my Executor be exempted from supplying her with a Room or Furniture excepting a Bed & furniture suitable for a Bed.

Item I give and bequeath to my two Sons William & Francis their Heirs & Assigns forever all my Estate real personal and mixed or of any other sort or kind whatever & wherever to be found to be equally divided between them, particular reference being had to what each one has or shall receive of me before my decease.

And I hereby nominate and appoint my Son William Sole Executor of this my last Will & Testament hereby revoking & making void all former Will or Wills by me heretofore made.

In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand & Seal this thirteenth day of August in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred & Eighty-four.

Signed Sealed published and delivered by
the aforementioned Joseph Rotch as & for his
last Will and Testament in the presence of Joseph Rotch Seal
us who have hereunto subscribed our names
as Witness thereto in presence of the
Testator and in the presence of each other--

Paul Ingraham

William Gordon

Edw. Pope

Bristol, ss.

January 4th, 1785

Then before the Honble George Leonard Esqr. Judge of the Probate of Wills for the County of Bristol came Paul Ingraham and Edward Pope two of the Witnesses to the before written Instrument and made Oath that they were present and saw Joseph Rotch the subscriber thereto who is since deceased sign seal and heard him publish & declare the same to be his last Will & Testament; and that he was of a sound disposing Mind & Memory when he so did. And that they with William Gordon sign'd as Witnesses at the same time and all in the presence of the Testator

Geo. Leonard.

The first impression given is that Joseph was treating his second wife rather shabbily. Five hundred dollars down and a hundred and fifty a year seems almost nothing today, not to mention the quaint provisions as to a room, furniture and a bed, a bed, remember, even if it is "my Wife's choice to remove to Philadelphia." On second thought it was not so bad. Perhaps the Revolution had made Old Joseph land poor, for whatever his losses may have been, he still owned many acres in the center of Bedford, most of Fairhaven, and a large area in Nantucket. But Rebecca was given more than she had contracted for sixteen years before at a time when Jos-

eph's wealth was unquestioned. She was then a Vaughan of Newport and the mother of a Biddle of Philadelphia, and undoubtedly had property of her own. A hundred pounds would purchase much in those days, too, and there was little to buy if a room were provided. At first I thought that Joseph was trying to prevent her return to her former home,, but there is record that on learning of Joseph Rotch's failing health, Clement (or Thomas) Biddle, who was a Commissary in the American Army, and who had married Rebecca's daughter, wrote to William Rotch that it was the wish of himself "and sister, in the event of the death of father, that Mother should go to Philadelphia to live with" them. Therefore, only a bed was to be needed in Philadelphia. Presumably Rebecca went, for, after assenting to the allowance of the will, she disappears from the records.

During the early Bedford days, Joseph had been more closely associated with the youthful Francis than with the elder William. But, though the estate was divided between the two, "reference being had to what each one has or shall receive of me before my decease", William was named sole executor. Perhaps this was because of the better business judgment of the elder son, who died a rich man while his brother died extremely poor, but probably it was because Francis had taken up his residence in Europe, and was to be found little in America for many years.

It is interesting to note that the first of the Rotches had made his sons' lots in life easier even before his own death. This was a practice which many of his descendants followed, and of which William Rotch, Sr. approves highly in one of his letters from France in 1794.

There is only one contemporary reference to Joseph's death that I find, and that seemed to me at first rather hard to explain. Elizabeth Rodman of Newport and Leicester had married Joseph's grandson, William, in 1782. On the tenth of December, 1784, sixteen days after her grandfather-in-law's death, she was writing from Newport to her husband's sister, Elizabeth Rotch Rodman, in Nantucket. After a chatty page telling of her experiences on a rough voyage from Nantucket and mentioning a wedding she had attended in Providence, she signs herself "With endeared love to you all I remain thy affectionate E. Rotch Junr." At the top of the next page she adds, very casually, "We heard of Grandfather's decease the

evening we arrived at Providence. Mama has heard from N. Easton who has an excellent creature for Sammy & Wm.—will attend to it being killed in order to send by Oliver. our dear little S. sends a kiss to her dear cousins & wants much to see them. please to excuse me to Cousin Lydia as I do not feel composed enough to write more at present—adieu—Mama desires her love to you all likewise S. & Charity.”

Here is Joseph’s death all mixed up with that of some unfortunate steer. It seemed hard to explain, because the fashion of the times tended to wordiness on most such subjects. But probably Elizabeth hardly knew her husband’s grandfather. Nantucket can be reached from New Bedford now by airplane in an hour or less, and last summer planes left several times a day. But in Revolutionary times it often necessitated a long and dangerous sail. Joseph was old and feeble, and young Elizabeth was invariably seasick. Joseph had left for Bedford for the last time three months before Elizabeth had married his grandson and she was in her early twenties when she wrote, an age when death is impersonal and causes few comments. Certainly there was no rift in the family, and Joseph’s death was very vitally to affect Elizabeth’s life, shortly, though she may not have realized it then. Four years later she and William, Jr. were to build a house, as I have said before, on the ruins of the one burned on Rotch’s Hill in Bedford and to take up the active leadership which Joseph had laid down only with his death.

Joseph Rotch is said to lie in an unmarked grave at the Apponegansett Meeting House. His sect considered a gravestone ostentatious in those days, so his descendants are denied the privilege of placing a wreath upon his last resting place. He did not tell from whence he came; perhaps he would prefer it as it is.

I close this reading with the opening paragraph of Ellis’ History of New Bedford”:

“The history of New Bedford as a definite part of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and of the old town of Dartmouth, would properly begin with the record that, in the year 1765, Joseph Rotch, who had previously settled on the Island of Nantucket, came here with his capital, energy, and enterprise to establish himself in the whaling business. He found here upon his arrival a little ham-

let, comprising among its inhabitants Joseph Russell, John Louden, shipbuilders; Benjamin Taber, blockmaker and boat builder; Gideon Mosher, mechanic; Elnathan Sampson, blacksmith. Under the impulse of these sturdy pioneers, Bedford village was founded and grew."



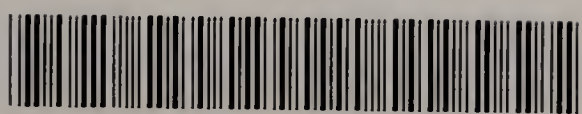
"OLD FOUR CORNERS" — NEW BEDFORD, MASS.

From original painting of Wm. A. Wall—1808

The house on the extreme left is the mansion of William Rotch Sr., son of Joseph Rotch, built in 1795. The next house, which is largely concealed by the square Dutch cap building, is the house in which Joseph Rotch died. The man in the chaise is William Rotch Sr. Under the flag is William Rotch Jr. and at the barber shop door is Samuel Rodman Sr., who married Joseph's granddaughter Elizabeth Rotch.

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